



# **China's Activities in East China Sea, Pacific Ocean, and Sea of Japan**



**April 2025  
Japan Ministry of Defense**

# China: Military activities in waters and airspace surrounding Japan

- China has relentlessly **continued attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force** in the sea area around the Senkaku Islands, leading to **a matter of grave concern**.
- China seems to **attempt to make its activities routine in the Sea of Japan and Pacific Ocean in addition to the sea area around the Senkaku Islands**. There is also a probability that **the activities in the Sea of Japan and Pacific Ocean will be further expanded and intensified**.

## PLA into the Pacific Ocean

- Since 2017, Military aircraft flights above the Pacific Ocean increase
- Since 2021, UAVs frequently pass between the Main Island of Okinawa and Miyakojima Island
- Since 2023, UAVs pass between the Yonagunijima Island and Taiwan
- Carrier-based fighter jets (including presumed) depart from Carrier Liaoning and flew over the Pacific Ocean (Apr. 2018, Apr. 2020, Apr. & Dec. 2021, May & Dec. 2022, Sep. to Oct. 2024)
- Carrier-based fighter jets depart from Carrier Shandong and flew over the Pacific Ocean (Apr., Sep. & Oct. to Nov. 2023, Jul., Aug. & Nov. 2024, Apr. 2024)

## China-Russia Cooperation

- Chinese and Russian naval vessels **jointly sailed around or near Japan** (Oct. 2021, Sep. 2022, Jul. & Aug. 2023, Jul., Sep. to Oct. 2024)
- **Long-range joint flight by Chinese and Russian bombers** (Jul. 2019, Dec. 2020, Nov. 2021, May 2022, Nov. 2022, Jun. 2023, Dec. 2023, Nov. 2024)

## Activities in the Sea of Japan

- Increase activity of Military Aircrafts above the Sea of Japan since 2018
- In Mar. 24, a **UAVs** flight over the Sea of Japan was confirmed for the first time.

## Activities in the East China Sea

- Continuous operation of PLAN vessels around the **Senkaku Islands**
- **Submarine** presumed to belong PLAN sails in the connected waters (Jun. 2020, Sep. 2021)
- Chinese intelligence gathering aircraft **intrude into Japan's Air space** (Aug. 2024)

## Around Taiwan

- Military exercise with many military aircrafts and ships around Taiwan. Entry of some aircrafts into "the median line" of Taiwan Strait (Aug. 2022, Apr. & Aug. 2023, May. & Oct. 2024, Apr. 2025)
- Launch of **9 ballistic missiles** into the exercise areas, including **Japan's EEZ**, established in the near sea around Japan (Aug. 2022)

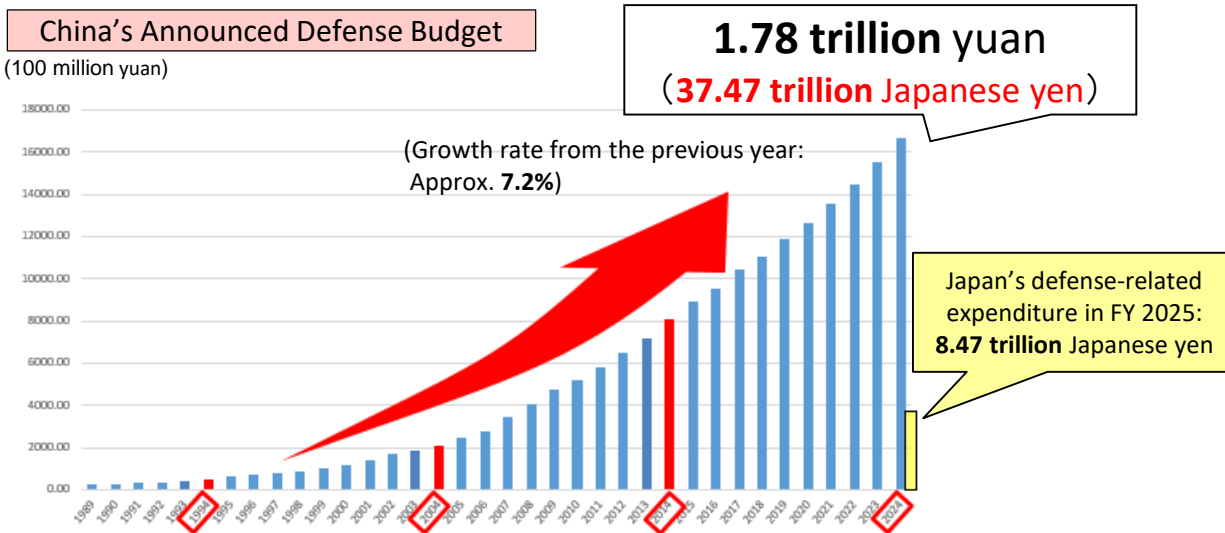
Aircraft →  
Ship →

500 km

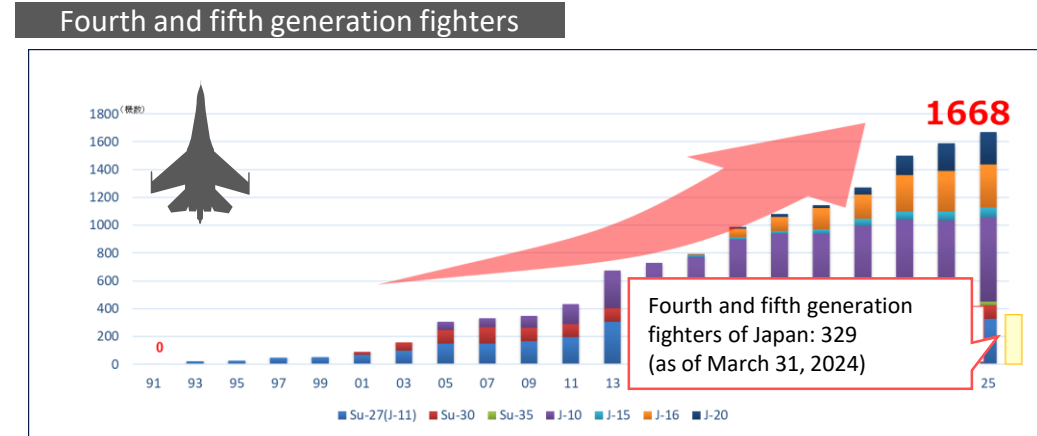
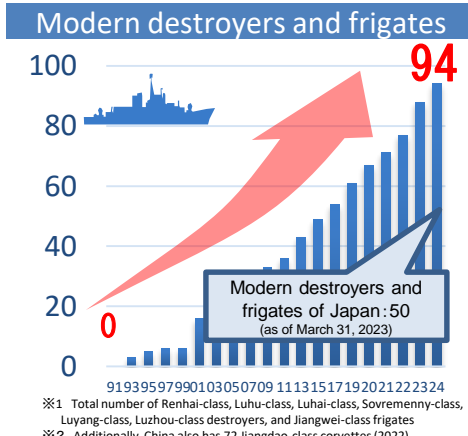
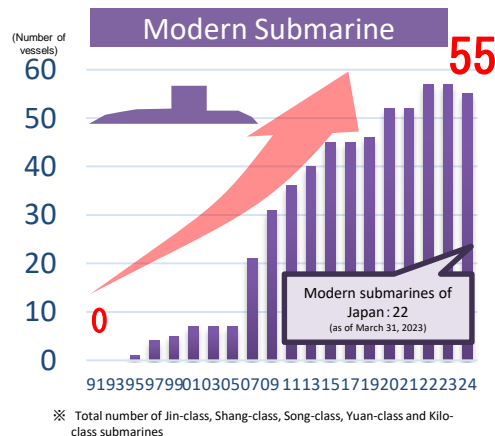
# Enhancement of Military Power

# Enhancement of Military Power

- China has been enhancing its military power, especially its naval or air forces and its nuclear or missile forces, extensively and rapidly due to the increase of its defense budget by a significant margin.
- It is noted that the amount of the announced defense budget is considered to be only a part of its actual military expenditures and does not include foreign equipment procurement costs or R&D expenses.



China's announced military budget has increased rapidly. It increased approx. 32-fold over the past 30 years, approx. 7.9-fold over the past 20 years and approx. 2.1-fold over the past 10 years.



# **East China Sea, Pacific Ocean and Sea of Japan**



# PLA's Activities in East China Sea

- **PLA Navy** (PLAN) **vessels** have been conducting **operations in the East China Sea** (ECS) **continuously and actively**. Moreover, these are **continuously operating in the areas near Japan's Senkaku Islands**.
- PLA Air Force (PLAAF) aircrafts have actively flown in airspace closer to Japan's Southwestern Islands (including the Okinawa Island and the Senkaku Islands)

## Activities of PLAAF aircrafts

### 【Activities of PLA aircrafts】

These are thought to include warning and surveillance, combat air patrols (CAPs), training, and such activities possibly intended to operate the "ECS ADIZ."

### 【Activities of UAVs】

They flew past in the air space between the Okinawa and Miyakojima Islands.

- Recent activities : Jun, Jul, Aug, Oct, Nov.2024, Feb. 2025

### 【Activities of intelligence gathering aircraft】

**Y-9 intrude into Japan's Air space**

- August. 2024:Y-9 (intelligence gathering aircraft)

## Activities around the Senkaku Islands

PLAN vessels **continuously operating in the areas near Senkaku Islands**.

- [Jun. 2016] A Jiangkai I-class frigate became the first ever PLAN combatant vessel to enter the contiguous zone.
- [Jul. 2022] A Jiangwei II-class frigate passed into the contiguous zone.

A Jiangwei II-class frigate

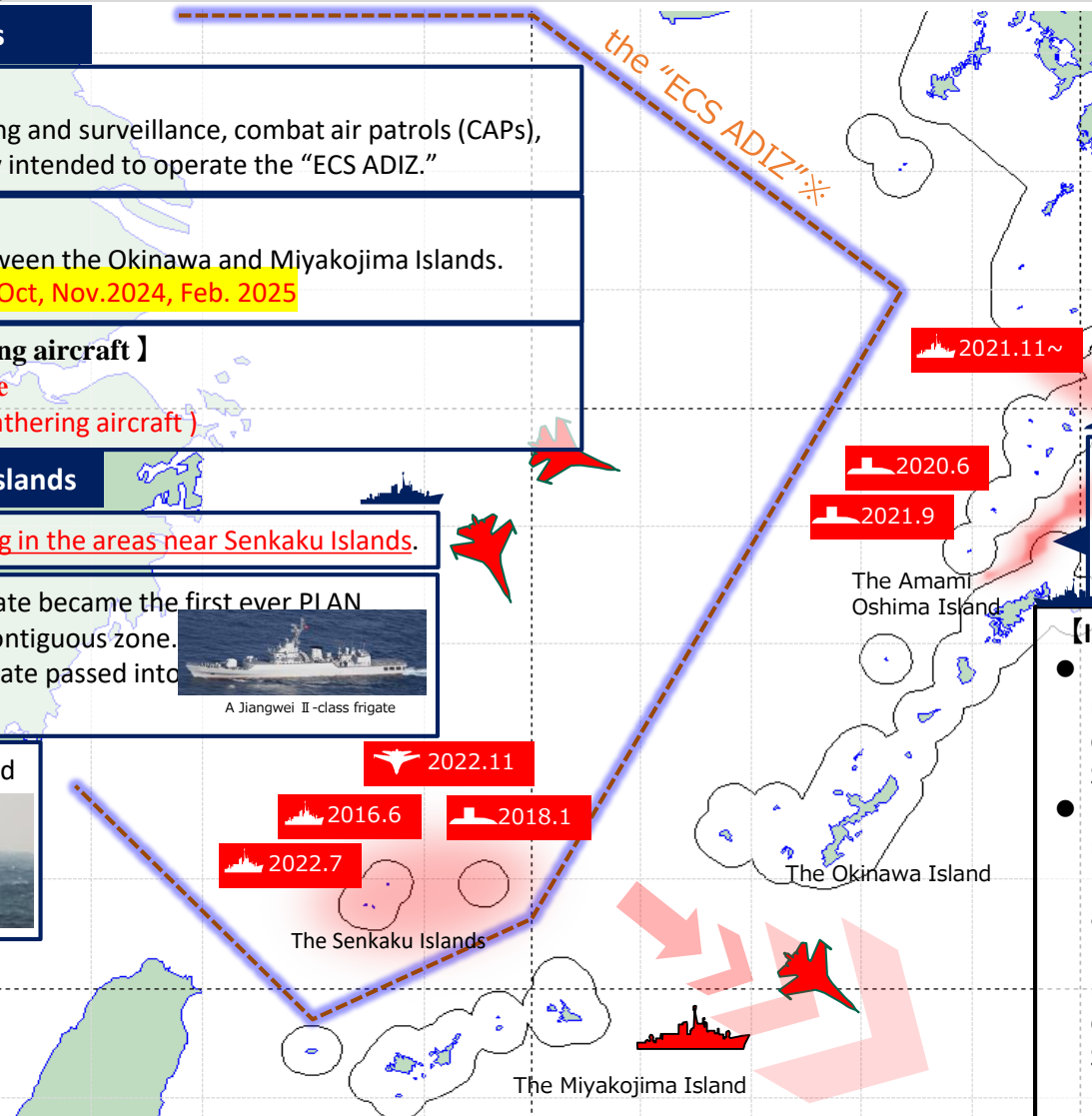
[Jan. 2018] A Shang-class submerged submarine and a Jiangkai II-class frigate passed into the contiguous zone

The PLAN submarine

[Nov. 2022] one presumed PLA UAV flew from the ECS, after passing south, and flew off in the direction of the continent.

※Descriptions and locations of each event are solely for illustration purpose

※China established the "ECS ADIZ" including the Senkaku Islands misleadingly indicated as if they were China's territory. China requires aircraft flying in the zone to abide by rules set by its Ministry of National Defense and claims to take military "defensive emergency measures" against aircraft failing to do so, unduly infringing on the principle of freedom of overflight.



## 【Survey ships】

From Nov. 2021, a PLAN Shupang-class survey ship navigated through territorial waters near Yakushima, Kuchinoerabujima and Kuchinoshima.

- |             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| ① Nov. 2021 | ② Apr. 2022 | ③ Jul. 2022 |
| ④ Sep. 2022 | ⑤ Nov. 2022 | ⑥ Dec. 2022 |
| ⑦ Feb. 2023 | ⑧ Jun. 2023 | ⑨ Sep. 2023 |
| ⑩ Aug. 2024 |             |             |



Shupang-class survey ship

[Jun.2020] [Sep. 2021] Submerged transit of a submarine presumed to belong to China was confirmed in the contiguous zone surrounding Amami Oshima Island

## 【Intelligence Gathering Vessels (AGIs)】

- [Nov. 2015] A PLAN Dongdiao-class AGI repeatedly navigated back and forth outside of the contiguous zone south of the Senkaku Islands
- [Jun. 2016] A PLAN Dongdiao-class AGI navigated in territorial waters near Kuchinoerabujima and Yakushima Islands, and then passed contiguous zone north of Kitadaitojima Island. Subsequently, It repeatedly conducted eastwest passages outside the contiguous zone south of the Senkaku Islands.



Dongdiao-class AGI

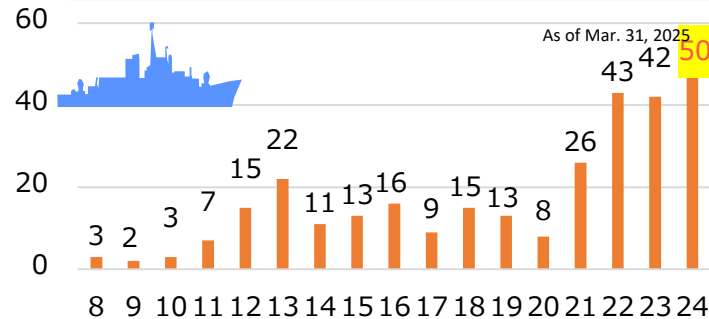
# PLA's Advancement into the Pacific Ocean

- PLAN combat vessels continue to transit the waters near Japan to advance into the Pacific Ocean (PO) with high frequency.
- As of PLA aircrafts, advances into the PO, passing between Okinawa/ Miyako Island, have become more active since 2017. The types and flight patterns of aircraft (including UAVs) passing through the airspace have also diversified.

## PLAN vessels

### 【PLAN combat vessels】

- PLAN vessels advance to the Pacific with high frequency
- More diverse routes
  - ① The Soya Strait, ② The Tsugaru Strait,
  - ③ The Osumi Strait, and Waters between
  - ④ Amami Oshima/ Yokoatejima Island
  - ⑤ Okinawa/ Miyako Island,
  - ⑥ Yonaguni/ Iriomote Island,
  - ⑦ Yonaguni/ Taiwan Island,



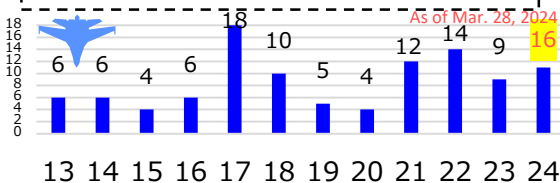
The number of Japan's press releases that PLAN combatant vessels and aircraft carriers operate around Southeast Islands, Soya Strait and Tsugaru Strait (Fiscal Year)

## PLA aircrafts

### 【Flights through Okinawa and Miyako Island】

- More diverse types/routes of aircraft

Y-8 AEW/SIGINT/EW, Y-9 SIGINT/patrol aircraft, Tu-154 SIGINT, H-6 bombers, Su-30 fighter, TB-001 UAV, BZK-005 UAV, WZ-7 UAV



The number of Japan's press releases on PLA aircraft's flights between Okinawa/Miyako Islands (Fiscal Year)

【Presumed UAV Flights through Yonaguni Island and Taiwan】

Recent activities : Jan.2025, Feb.2025, Mar.2025

## PLAN Aircraft Carriers

### 【CV "Liaoning"】

- Since 2016, advancements into PO have been confirmed **ten** times.
  - Landings/takeoffs of aircrafts (including carrier-based fighters) were frequently observed.
- |             |             |            |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| ① Dec. 2016 | ② Apr. 2018 | ⑨ Sep.2024 |
| ③ Jun. 2019 | ④ Apr. 2020 | ⑩ Oct.2024 |
| ⑤ Apr. 2021 | ⑥ Dec. 2021 |            |
| ⑦ May 2022  | ⑧ Dec. 2022 |            |



CV "Liaoning"

### 【CV "Shandong"】

- Since 2023, advancements into PO have been confirmed **seven** times.
  - Landings/takeoffs of aircrafts (including carrier-based fighters) were observed every time.
- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| ① Apr. 2023 | ⑤ Aug. 2024 |
| ② Sep. 2023 | ⑥ Nov. 2024 |
| ③ Oct. 2023 | ⑦ Apr.2025  |
| ④ Jul. 2024 |             |



CV "Shandong"

Aug. 2017

H-6 bombers\*6 (Red)  
Flight paths near Japan (Example)

# PLA's Activities in the Sea of Japan

- In the Sea of Japan (SOJ), PLAN and PLAAF have intensified activities, including joint activities with Russia.
- PLAN combat vessels have advanced into the SOJ on some occasions (including trainings), and recently, PLAN AGIs passing through the Tsushima Strait have frequently been confirmed.
- PLA aircraft have been increasing their activities in the SOJ since Jan. 2016, when PLA aircraft's passage through the Tsushima Strait was confirmed for the first time.

※Descriptions and locations of each event are solely for illustration purpose

## Joint Activities with Russia

### 【PLA aircrafts】

- Since 2019, PLA made bombers' joint flights with Russia **nine** times (they flew SOJ except 8<sup>th</sup> flight).

#### 【Record of the joint flights】

1. July. 2019	2. Dec. 2020	3. Nov. 2021
4. May. 2022	5. Nov. 2022	6. June. 2023
7. Dec. 2023	8. Jul. 2024	9. Nov. 2024

- On one occasion, PLA aircraft passed through Russian airspace and directly entered the SOJ.



PLA H-6 (left) and Russian Tu-95MS (right)

### 【PLAN vessels】

- Since 2013, the China-Russia bilateral exercise "Joint Sea" has also been conducted in the SOJ on a regular basis.
- After "Joint Sea 2021", they conducted the first joint navigation.
- In Sep. 2022, PLAN vessels joined "Vostok 2022" for the first time. After that, they conducted the second joint navigation.
- In Oct. 2024, Russia and China conduct the 5<sup>th</sup> China-Russia joint naval patrol

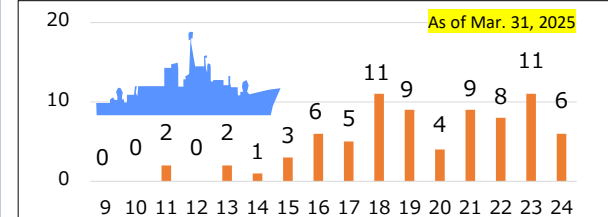
Source: Joint Staff  
(Oct. 2021)



Russian Navy vessels (left), PLAN vessels (right)

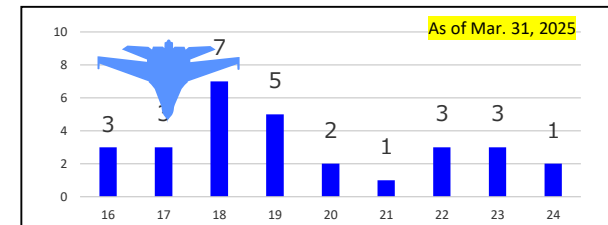
## Passages through the Tsushima Strait

### 【PLAN vessels】



Number of Japan's press releases that PLA combat vessels' passage through the Tsushima Strait (Fiscal Year)

### 【PLA aircrafts】



The number of Japan's press releases that PLA aircraft fly through Tsushima Strait (Fiscal Year)

2019.7~ Joint Flights with Russia ①~⑦,⑨

Joint Navigation with Russia ①

Joint Navigation with Russia ②③